THE WEST

More rural Oregonians OK anti-gay rights measures

Perkins 'very excited' by vote results

By **Louis Aguilar**/Gazette Telegraph

Six local anti-gay rights initiatives whose language was patterned after Colorado's Amendment 2 won voter approval in four counties and two farming towns in Oregon on Tuesday.

The victories mark the seventh time Amendment 2-type initiatives have been passed by Oregon voters during local elections since November.

"We're going as expected," said John Leon, a regional coordinator for the Oregon Citizens Alliance, the group that has waged a five-year effort against gay rights in that state.

In 1992, the Citizens Alliance sponsored a statewide initiative — Measure 9 — that defined homosexuality as "perverse, abnormal and unnatural" and required that schools and state and local governments actively discourage it.

That measure lost, 56 percent to 44 percent, but was approved in 21 of Oregon's 36 counties. The Citizens Alliance quickly attempted to put local ordinances in many of the counties and cities that had backed Measure 9. It also began statewide campaigns in Washington and Idaho.

The latest measures don't have the controversial language of last year's referendum and are patterned after the Colorado initiative created by Colorado Springs-based Colorado for Family Values. The Colorado measure would ban laws prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals based on their sexual orientation.

Mail-in votes were counted Tuesday night in rural Linn, Douglas, Josephine and Klamath counties and the small towns of Junction City and Canby, which is southeast of Portland. In Linn and Douglas Counties, the measures won by landslides — nearly 3-1 margins. In Junction City, it won by a mere 4 votes.

Last month, the Oregon farming town of Cornelius also approved the measure.

The next round of local elections is slated for September.

Groups in at least four other states — Michigan, Maine, Florida and Missouri — have adopted the tactics of Colorado for Family Values and are attempting to draft Amendment 2-type measures.

Will Perkins, Colorado for Family Values spokesman, said that he and his group were "very excited" about the election results in Oregon.

"There are many significant things about those results. But one of the most important is that people have been able to look at the homosexual agenda for themselves. They have seen the ban on the military campaign, the behavior in the parade they've held.

"People have looked at that and simply decided they didn't want that," he said.

But gay rights activists played down the election results because the Oregon counties and towns had previously backed Measure 9.

"The defeats are discouraging, but we really did not lose or gain ground," said Robin Kane, a spokeswoman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, D.C.

But Kane admitted that the elections bolster the perception that gay rights opponents continue to be one step ahead of gay rights supporters.

"As long as they can continue to tap into the stereotypes of gays and lesbians, they will win," she said.

A gay rights bill backed by Gov. Barbara Roberts now is before the Oregon Legislature. It has been passed by the Democrat-controlled state Senate and is pending before the Republican-controlled House.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer contributed to this report.

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